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# Press Release

CONTACT: Angela Rushen, Manager, Media and Public Affairs  
(213) 236-1809  
rushen@scag.ca.gov



## **600 LEADERS CONVENE IN LA QUINTA TO DISCUSS:** *Getting Back to Golden: Jobs, Transportation and Sustainability in Southern California*

**La Quinta – May 5, 2011** – The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Regional Conference & General Assembly kicked-off today at the La Quinta Resort in Coachella Valley.

Besides the election of the new Regional Council Executive Officers, today's program featured panel discussions with business, labor, and public sector leaders and the unveiling of the Draft Southern California Economic Recovery & Job Creation Strategy, a panel on federal and state transportation legislation moderated by political columnist Dan Walters, as well as a luncheon with Edison International Chairman, Ted Craver. The day concluded with an awards banquet for the Compass Blueprint program (recognizing developers and municipalities with innovative approaches to smart growth, land-use and transportation planning) and also included the 2011 Public Sector Agency Partnership President's Award to Mary Nichols, Chairwoman of the Air Resources Board, and the 2011 Private Sector Partner President's Award to Greg McWilliams, President of Newhall Land Corporation.

"We're very excited to bring together some of the finest minds from government, business, labor and other leaders to discuss the policy challenges and economic landscape our state faces in the years ahead," said **Larry McCallon, SCAG past President and Highland Councilmember**.

One of the hottest topics of the day--the unveiling of the Draft Southern California Economic Recovery & Job Creation Strategy--provided some needed silver-lining for California's future. **Greg McWilliams, Chairman, Global Land Use & Economics Council** said, "The draft Recovery Strategy includes input from government, business, labor and environmental organizations, throughout Southern California; it represents a good faith effort on the part of SCAG, its partners and stakeholders to work together, with varied interests, to increase jobs and find workable solutions that address economic challenges and promote a better, more sustainable, future for our region."

"The Plan was put together with the top economic experts in the South and proposes short and long term actions to recover the 980,000 jobs lost since 2007," said **Wally Baker, Executive Director of the Southern California Leadership Council**. "Southern California has 2.3 million jobs at stake and cannot afford to lose any more companies to Texas or neighboring states due to

more favorable tax incentives. We must work with state leaders to preserve and attract new business investments to California,” he said.

“SCAG is committed to seeking public comment on the economic recovery plan discussed here today and then working with partners locally, in Sacramento and Washington DC to recover the 980,000 lost jobs and expand our key industries such as construction, goods movement logistics, entertainment, education, and manufacturing,” **said Hasan Ikhata, SCAG Executive Director.**

In reflecting on the day’s activities, **SCAG Incoming President Pam O’Connor** and Santa Monica Councilmember remarked that, “SCAG continues to benefit from the valuable input received through our community and business leaders on critical issues to our cities such as jobs, housing and transportation. Having their voices and experience at the table enriches SCAG’s efforts to work together on finding ways to preserve and promote economic vitality and sustainable policies for Southern California.”

Program highlights for tomorrow include breakout sessions on “Transportation Strategies For The 21st Century” and “California's Sustainable Communities Strategy – Creating a New Land Use Dynamic.”

## **2011 SCAG Regional Conference & General Assembly- Thursday & Friday, May 5-6, 2011**

49-499 Eisenhower Drive, La Quinta, CA 92253 ♦Tel: (760) 564-4111 Fax: (760) 564-5718

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### ***About SCAG***

*SCAG is the nation’s largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 190 cities and more than 18 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to plan for a livable and sustainable Southern California now and in the future. For more information about SCAG’s regional efforts, please visit [www.scag.ca.gov](http://www.scag.ca.gov).*